

# **CAFOD Management Response to an Independent Evaluation of CAFOD's Accountability work over 2010-2015**

*September 2016*

## **Overview**

This management response was developed and agreed by CAFOD's Corporate Leadership Group to ensure the recommendations of this evaluation are followed up and the lessons learned are integrated into its ongoing accountability work. The evaluation was carried out over July-Oct 2015 by an independent consultancy team. We are satisfied that the evaluation has met its ToR and will share the evaluation report and this management response with DFID as part of CAFOD's reporting on its Partnership Programme Agreement 2011-16.

Of the 8 formal recommendations made by the evaluation team, we fully accept 6 and partially accept two. Our response to each recommendation is highlighted in Table A below. The evaluation also helpfully identified 11 key lessons which are now being addressed by CAFOD's T2020 Accountability Review Project alongside many of the recommendations. This project is due to complete in 2016/17.

## **General comments**

We welcome the findings of this evaluation as representing a fair and balanced assessment of the current status of CAFOD's accountability work with partners and communities. Our full or partial acceptance of all the recommendations, and supporting commentary, reflects that we are already aware of many of the relative strengths and weaknesses raised by the review, are already building from or addressing many of them, and have learned valuable lessons for the future in managing accountability work.

We were pleased to see independent affirmation of the effectiveness and impact of CAFOD's accountability work, particularly that "CAFOD [has] successfully delivered a menu of support to partners in its development and humanitarian programmes", that "feedback from partners suggests that it has strengthened their knowledge and influenced their practice", and that "there is significant evidence of positive changes in partner awareness, commitment and capacity for accountability which has translated into greater engagement with communities which have been able to have influence in the design and delivery of projects that have affected them".

However, we also recognise and accept that, going forward, it is "within CAFOD itself where there is the greatest challenges in reaching consensus on how to define accountability and deliver support in a way that meets partner needs and CAFOD's commitments under its partnership model", and that there is "an important need to consider the implications [CAFOD's principle of subsidiarity] has for CAFOD's accountability commitments – both downwards from CAFOD to communities and upwards from communities to CAFOD".

The evaluation has been a particularly useful exercise for us running in parallel with and informing our internal T2020 Review Change Project. It has provided an important source of evidence which has fed into an organisational conversation about our accountability work, across CAFOD and involving partners, programmes and humanitarian staff and managers. It has also generated some valuable lessons to inform the way we carry out this type of evaluation in future. The external perspective of the evaluation team and the insights they have been able to provide from their experience and expertise have been valuable for us at project, country and organisational levels, and reinforced our learning processes.

**Table 1: Response to Evaluation Recommendations<sup>1</sup>**

Rec No.	Recommendation	Accept, partially accept or reject?	Commentary
<b>Corporate-level recommendations</b>			
1.	<p><b>Leadership of accountability:</b> It is important that a corporate oversight body, with responsibility for oversight and management of CAFOD’s accountability work is established. In addition to the responsibilities outlined in the Accountability Steering Group (ASG) ToR, this body should promote coherence in how CAFOD’s accountability commitments are articulated at the corporate-level and hold oversight of how these are translated into practice. Its mandate should also include monitoring of the accountability commitments implicit in the refreshed J1W and its ToR and membership should reflect the structure changes implicit in T2020. This body should also hold oversight of organisational resourcing to meet CAFOD’s accountability commitments.</p>	Accept	<p>Accountability remains a corporate priority for CAFOD. However, we accept CAFOD’s need to clarify how oversight of the delivery of its accountability commitments will in future be held within its new leadership and management group structures. A new corporate Vision and Principles on accountability has been agreed and an implementation plan for delivering this is now being developed through CAFOD’s ongoing Accountability Change Project, ‘Strengthening accountability to people and communities through partnership’. This project is expected to complete in 2016/17. It includes within its deliverables agreement on the extent to which CAFOD intends to monitor and report on accountability at corporate level to ensure coherence in the implementation of its accountability commitments.</p> <p>CAFOD’s corporate oversight and management roles will include responsibility for ensuring the renewed accountability Vision and Principles and its commitments within the Vision, Mission and Values in CAFOD’s <i>Just One World</i> Strategic Framework (now refreshed for 2016-20) are resourced, implemented, and demonstrated.</p> <p>CAFOD’s Vision for Accountability was approved in May 2016: ‘Accountability is integral to CAFOD’s Vision, Mission and Values. It supports people and communities to influence decisions affecting their lives.’ Five principles were affirmed to underpin this: ‘Enabling’ principles (Responsibility and Contextualisation) and ‘Supporting’ Principles (Transparency, Inclusion and Feedback).</p> <p>CAFOD’s <i>Just One World</i> refresh commits CAFOD to “increase the quality and impact of its development assistance in ways that are transparent, accountable and responsive to the issues faced by the poorest and most disadvantaged” and to strengthen local capacity and participation internationally and in England and Wales.</p>

<sup>1</sup> The recommendations can be found on pages 4-5 of the Evaluation Executive Summary which can be found on CAFOD’s website.

			CAFOD will be taking these principles and commitments forward into its accountability practice in locally-appropriate ways that reflect CAFOD's external accountability commitments.
2.	<p><b>Promotion of a coherent vision and understanding of accountability within CAFOD:</b> In order to reconcile the different views that exist and to unite the organisation around a common understanding, it is recommended that through its Accountability Review Project, CAFOD more clearly defines accountability and offers a vision of how it can be practiced within a partnership model. An essential part of this will be to broker agreement on how the current emphasis on accountability as a compliance issue can be balanced with accountability as part of a softer set of relational practices. It will only be through providing leadership in a way that is clear that CAFOD will be able to build consensus on this important issue.</p>	Accept	<p>CAFOD's Accountability Change Project has addressed this as a key deliverable. CAFOD's Vision and Principles for its accountability to people and communities were developed through a bottom-up, participatory process involving CAFOD's international programme staff. Head Office and regional workshops were held for participants to develop and articulate their own vision and principles. Workshop outputs were consolidated and rationalised to enable a collective CAFOD vision to be formed, fully owned and championed at all levels. This has been finalised and agreed by CAFOD's Corporate Leadership Group and shared with CAFOD's Board. Responsibility for ensuring coherence in the delivery and oversight of the agreed vision and principles will be embedded within the role of CAFOD's new Business Management Cluster.</p> <p>CAFOD accepts that practising accountability will continue to be challenging within a partnership organisation responsive to a diversity of partner and community contexts. However, our 'enabling' principles of accountability – Responsibility and Contextualisation – aim to ensure that whilst accountability systems or processes will differ in each context, their objective remains the same: to enable people and communities to influence the decisions that affect their lives.</p>
3.	<p><b>Consistency in how accountability is addressed in CAFOD's policy and procedures:</b> The vision of accountability referred to in the recommendation above should be translated through all of CAFOD's strategic and programme planning and implementation documents. With so much change happening and with a raft of revised programme policies under development, it is essential that a consistent set of messages about how CAFOD views accountability and the implications of this for its partnership model and international programme are included throughout these documents.</p>	Accept	<p>CAFOD's policies and procedures will be updated to ensure clear consistent messaging that reflects the new vision and principles. This was included as a change project deliverable and involved updating CAFOD's International Partnership and Programme Management Manuals and associated Tools Catalogue, which together provide the foundations for our international programming approach.</p>

Programme-level recommendations			
4.	<p><b>The adoption of accountability principles:</b> Mindful of the importance of bridging the ideological differences which exist and noting the need for a flexible approach to accountability which can accommodate CAFOD's diverse partner types, programming models and the different contexts within which CAFOD's partners work, it is suggested that, through its Accountability Review Project, CAFOD develops a set of accountability principles. These should be consistent with CAFOD's theological understanding and definition of accountability and should provide space for partners and the communities they work with to contextualise them. Rather than seek to interrogate these through a spreadsheet-based approach which has failed in the past, the principles should become part of CAFOD's regular discussions with partners with a light annual reporting requirement against each. In this way, accountability has a far greater chance of enhancing CAFOD's relationship with partners rather than being seen as an extractive obligation.</p>	Accept	<p>The Accountability Change Project has addressed this as its primary deliverable (see response to Rec 2 above).</p> <p>Exploration of what a 'light annual reporting requirement' will form one workstream within the project. CAFOD's new annual reflection process for country programmes (introduced Autumn 2015) – from which annual country reporting flows – allows scope for reflection on progress against country strategy priorities and thematic cross-cutting issues, including accountability, and may include strategic partners. However, in terms of partner dialogue and reporting, this may need to be balanced alongside other actions to address existing concerns among some programme staff that they already carry a lengthy checklist of issues to address in their discussions with partners, which may constrain space and time for in-depth exploration of accountability issues or for providing adequate follow-up and support to any accountability issues raised.</p> <p>CAFOD's theological understanding of accountability currently links to its <i>Understanding of Stewardship</i>, a corporate position paper one of CAFOD's seven core values which includes 'relational' stewardship commitments to its partners and communities, North and South. This position was founded in a theological perspective on stewardship and informed by Catholic Social Teaching. CAFOD's mandate for renewing its vision for accountability also draws inspiration from Pope Francis' message to all CARITAS organisations in Oct 2015 that 'we are accountable to God, to the Church, to the donors and in particular, to the poor with whom the Lord identifies Himself'.</p>
5.	<p><b>Re-affirming accountability as a two-way process:</b> The emphasis that has been placed on PPA reporting since 2011 has focused on accountability between CAFOD's partners and the communities they work with. However, there has been far less attention paid to the accountability of CAFOD to its partners. While the evaluation found evidence of good practice in engaging partners in regional strategy development and eliciting their feedback during annual reviews, feedback also suggests that this could be strengthened. It will continue to be important for</p>	Accept	<p>Mutual accountability is a key Partnership Principle in CAFOD's International Partnership Policy which CAFOD commits to explore regularly with its partners. CAFOD's formal mechanism for assurance of mutual accountability between CAFOD and partners has (since 2012) been two-yearly partner feedback surveys, independently administered to enable partner anonymity. Findings from this in 2012 and 2014 would suggest that there is still room for strengthening this to incorporate other feedback (including informal), reflecting variable practice across countries and teams. Our revised Country Strategy development process now includes as an essential requirement that country teams consult with partners during CSP design to ensure transparency and mutual accountability while enhancing partner and staff understanding of our strategic options (it is assumed that partners are endeavouring to do the same with the communities they</p>

	CAFOD to emphasise the mutual nature of accountability and to role-model the behaviour which it seeks to promote with its partners.		<p>work with). Strategic partners must also be invited to contribute to the strategic analysis and appraisal of strategic options.</p> <p>In early 2015, CAFOD became a signatory to the international <i>Charter for Change</i> which commits us to strengthening our ways of working in humanitarian response so that 'southern-based national actors can play an increased and more prominent role in humanitarian response'. This includes through: increasing transparency around resource transfers to partners; strengthening local capacity, and promoting the role of local actors and their work in humanitarian response.</p>
6.	<p><b>The need to routinely adopt a holistic approach to accountability:</b> CAFOD places a specific focus on CHM [Complaints Handling Mechanisms] with its partners which appears at times to take precedence over the adoption of a more holistic framework of accountability. It needs to locate <i>complaint handling</i> within a holistic framework of accountability and express it as <i>one</i> component of good accountability practice which gives equal priority to information sharing and transparency, participation and feedback.</p>	Partially accept	<p>Our accountability change project is now seeking to address how best to strengthen accountability as a holistic, routine practice across our programmes and partnerships, which embraces Complaints Handling Mechanisms within a wider approach. A internal 'corporate sponsor' for accountability has been identified and we are now exploring the possibility of internal focal points, for promoting and incentivising staff and partner behaviours, and of learning groups for capturing and sharing good practice between programmes and partners.</p> <p>CAFOD's specific focus on Complaints Handling Mechanisms with its partners in recent years was a response to CHM being identified as a key area of weakness during baseline assessments for CAFOD's 'Minimum Standards of Partner Accountability' over 2009-2011. The assumption was that partners were relatively strong in other areas of accountability such as information sharing and participation as these aspects of accountability were embedded in partners' community-led approaches to development.</p> <p>CAFOD's support to partners on accountability has always been holistic, with information sharing, transparency and participation included as key components of partner training. CHM has, however, often been the focus of other forms of support, eg accountability micro-grants.</p> <p>Some of the challenges that CAFOD and partners have experienced in implementing and sustaining feedback and complaints mechanisms may be attributed to the focus that partners have placed on complaints mechanisms within the communities they work with, rather than taking a holistic perspective which includes information sharing and community participation in decision making.</p>
7.	<p><b>Promotion of contextualised feedback mechanisms which meet CAFOD's internal CHM</b></p>	Accept	<p>CAFOD accepts that because partners are the primary interface with the people and communities it aims to support, complaints and feedback mechanisms should, where</p>

	<p><b>policy:</b> In order to meet CAFOD’s CHM policy and to address feedback from the CHS verification report, it is recommended that CAFOD continues to routinely support its partners to develop contextually-relevant feedback mechanisms which can capture and respond to feedback provided by the communities they work with. In the absence of an effective link between CAFOD and communities, its accountability responsibilities can be met by ensuring that partners have effective mechanisms in place and evidencing that they are being used.</p>		<p>possible, be implemented through partner organisations. However, to ensure that CAFOD is meeting its accountability commitments and obligations to communities, CAFOD will (through its accountability change project) develop mechanisms that ensure that it is hearing relevant feedback from people and communities even if it is being channelled through partners. It will also consider how to hear feedback from communities in the absence of a partner mechanism.</p> <p>CAFOD will identify and define what “relevant” feedback and complaints are, and the most appropriate and affordable means of evidencing these so that CAFOD can assure itself that this is happening in a way that enables accountability to donors, supporters and relevant external verification or assurance bodies such as the Core Humanitarian Alliance. CAFOD will continue to require partners to report any incidents of PSEA in CAFOD-funded programme, whether relating to children or adults, through our funding agreements with partners.</p>
8.	<p><b>The importance of strengthening learning and knowledge management:</b> CAFOD has gathered a wealth of knowledge on issues of accountability but this is not available in a way that is accessible or in a format that is easily digestible to its staff and partners. The evaluation highlighted a significant demand from CAFOD partners for technical support and knowledge which may be met in part through an approach to learning and knowledge management which can make this information more easily accessible.</p>	Partially accept	<p>This recommendation is only partially accepted because of the limited current capacity in place to address this relative to other corporate priorities themes such as gender and child protection, but also accepting that support on learning and knowledge management will in future need to be more locally-accessible and functional for CAFOD’s devolved partnership model to be effective. The extent to which this can be ‘strengthened’, and what this means in practice, will therefore need to be worked out locally in each country context.</p>